社会学部論集　第 40 号（2005 年 3 月）

Household Labor and Hidden Power in Japanese Couples : A Cross-National Comparison with Sweden

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Abstract

This paper empirically examines power processes in the allocation of household labor among dual-working couples within two countries, Japan and Sweden. First, based on the findings of this study, power appears to work on the advantage of male partners in both countries. Second, it is probably a most significant finding in the present paper that manifest and hidden forms of (latent and invisible) power play different roles among couples between the two countries. While overt conflicts and manifest power are particularly prominent among Swedish couples, it is less likely to find such a power mechanism in Japanese couples. It suggests that more rigid gendered culture, strengthened by employment system and state policies, appears to preclude open conflicts and negotiations from taking place among Japanese couples.

Key words household labor, hidden power, dual-working couples, cross-national comparison

1. Introduction

Previous research has repeatedly documented that women continue to perform the lion's share in household labor despite the large growth of their paid employment (Shelton & John, 1996 ; Hass, 1999 ; Coltrane, 2000). Why do men have not assumed more responsibility for unpaid family work? To explain this discrepancy, social scientists have developed a number of conceptual frameworks. Most common approaches among them are time availability, relative resources, and gender role ideology. According to the time availability model, spouses divide household work based on who has more time to do household

tasks. The basic assumption here is spouses willingly allocate their time and other resources to maximize the utility of their household (Becker, 1981 & 1991). The relative resource model drawing on the work of Blood and Wolfe (1960) hypothesizes that a spouse with greater socioeconomic resources has a greater power and thus enables her/him to avoid aversive household work (Festermaker B, 1985). Similar to the time availability model, the division of domestic labor is seen as a reasonable trade-off of resources through negotiations between spouses. The ideology model focuses on fixed gender role internalized through the socialization process. Thus the more traditional spouses' gender role attitudes, the less the husband's relative share while the more egalitarian spouses' attitudes, the more equal the division of household labor. These conventional approaches obviously provide some basis for accounting for the domestic division of labor ; however, feminists have criticized these frameworks concentrate only on consensual and individualistic domain of domestic labor. Their primary critique is these approaches neglect that gender asymmetry within couples is inseparably related to wider systems of male power and that spouses negotiate divergent and conflicting preferences with one another (Ferree, 1990 : 867).

The present paper focuses on such negotiations and conflicts on the division of household labor among dual-working couples by applying Lukes's theory of power (1974). The main aim of this paper is to examine the relevance of power for an understanding the gender division of labor within two different countries, Japan and Sweden. A cross-national comparison is a useful apparatus to assess how social structures affect the power dynamics in interpersonal relationships.

Both Japan and Sweden are highly industrialized societies ; however there are considerably large differences on gender equality, specifically concerned here. Sweden has been regarded as one of nations having more progressive gender equality policies, characterized by "weak bread-winner regime" (Lewis, 1992), or "individual model welfare state" (Sainsbury, 1994). Japan, on the other hand, has been portrayed negatively in terms of gender arrangements. Japanese welfare state is often called as "Japanese-style welfare society" (Harada, 1992), in which the family (=women) has always taken on the central role in social welfare. Siaroff (1994) has attempted a comparative analysis of welfare states in 23 OECD countries in terms of female work desirability and recipient of social benefits. According to her typology, Sweden is conceptualized as "Protestant social democratic welfare state," in which female labor force participation is highly desirable and substantial social benefits are paid to the individual. Japan, on the contrary, is grouped

into “late female mobilization welfare states”, in which female employment is less desirable and minimum family benefits are paid to the head of household.

A recent report on the Gender Empowerment Measure in 2004 also well illustrates the contrasting features of the two countries ; Sweden is ranked the third highest while Japan is the 44 th among 50 nations. Further, *Time Use : Diary and Direct Reports* (Juster et al. 2002) indicates that among five western nations (U. S. Finland, Sweden, Hungary, Japan), male market time is substantially higher in Japan but lowest in Sweden. Time spent doing housework by men, on the contrary, is considerably higher in Sweden but strikingly lower in Japan ; 27 hours (1993) per week for Swedish males and a little more than 4 hours per week for Japanese males (1995).

This paper is divided into three sections. In the next section, I briefly overview the concept of power offered by Lukes (1974) and Komter (1989), then move on to analyze the both quantitative and qualitative data to assess how different forms of power shape negotiations and conflicts between partners within the two countries. Finally, I discuss the degree of variations in the two countries in terms of power dynamics to be found in the heterosexual couples and point to economic, social and cultural/ideological factors to an understanding of those differences.

2. Theoretical Framework

In order to analyze how power plays in the areas of housework, this study makes use of the concept of power offered by Lukes (1974) in his monograph *Power : A Radical View* and by Komter (1989) in her article on “Hidden Power in Marriage.”

Lukes's theory of power offers the multi-dimensional view of power. The one-dimensional view, based on Dahl's concept of power, focuses on who prevails in decision-making on issues over observable (overt) conflicts of preferences. Conflicts of preferences, according to this view, are crucial in providing an empirical basis for identifying the exercise of power. The two- dimensional approach, based on Bachrach and Baratz's use of power, examines non-decisions as well as decisions. According to this approach, non-decision is conceptualized as a decision that results in suppression of a manifest challenge to the preferences of the powerful. In this view, it is critical to focus on non-decisions that prevent potential issues from being raised. The exercise of power is not necessarily based on overt conflicts, but may also ensure from covert conflicts, which are observable in principle (Lukes, 1974).

Lukes's third-dimensional view of power involves a critique of the behavioral base of the two previous views. To identify the exercise of power, Lukes takes a different approach by focusing on the way, in which potential issues are kept from arena of conflicts whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or through individuals' decisions. What Lukes adds as the third dimension of power is a latent conflict, which consists in a contradiction between the desires and preferences of those exercising power and "real interests"of those they exclude. Lukes' three-dimensional approach obviously opens up different ways of conceptualizing power. However, his concept of real interests has received much criticism. A main critique is how to find empirical grounds of real interests (Komter, 1989).

Komter (1989) analyzes the power process in marital relationships by making use of Lukes' concept of the three-dimensional view of power. However, she approaches the third dimension of power in a different way by using Gramsci's work on "ideological hegemony", the invisible ideological forces resulting from a slow process, in which consensus is developed between dominant and subordinate groups. Here, consensus is conceived as the approval by subordinate groups of the dominant values, symbols, beliefs, and opinions. Komter articulates the third dimension of power is the subtle mechanism of gender ideology/norms embedded deeply in practices and persons that recreates male privilege even without conscious awareness of the individuals involved.

In the present paper, a theoretical distinction is made among "manifest power", "latent power", and "invisible power." Manifest power, first dimension of power, can be identified by who's preference prevails when exists overt conflict of preferences. Latent power, second face of power, reflects in the force to keep issues from being raised. It can be identified when the needs and wishes of the more powerful person are anticipated. Lastly, invisible power, third dimension of power, refers to the hegemonic values that confirm and justify gender inequality, and that usually do not surface in overt behaviors or covert grievances (Komter, 1989).

3. Empirical Findings

(1) Collection of Data

①Swedish Sample

Quantitative data for Swedish sample were derived from the Swedish Survey ("Survey of Labor and Economy in the Family") conducted in 1996 across the nation with indi-

viduals between 25 and 60 years old, married or cohabitating. Respondents of the survey were 659 of women and 622 of men. Overall return rate were 68.0 per cent (Ahrne & Roman, 1997). In this sample, there were 73.0 per cent of married and 27.0 per cent of cohabitating (＝Sambo) individuals. Women were an average of 42.0 years old and had 12.3 years of formal education ; men were an average of 44.7 years of age and 12.1 years of formal education. Women worked an average of 35.6 hours per week and her relative earnings to total couple's earnings were 41.0 per cent. Years of marriage (or cohabitation) were an average of 17.0 years and 36.0 per cent had at least one child younger than 8 year-old.

②Japanese Sample

For the purpose of a national-cross comparative research with Sweden, the Japanese Survey (“Survey of the Family and Working Life”) was conducted in 1998 with a random sample of married couples living in four suburb cities in the northern part of Osaka Prefecture in Japan. Most questions in the Japanese Survey were directly translated from the Swedish Survey. Wives and husbands were asked to fill in parallel but separate questionnaires. The number of respondents was 979 couples (979 wives and 979 husbands) ; overall return rate were 30.9 per cent (Matsuda, 1999). In order to match with the Swedish sample, dual-working couples in nuclear families with wives employed full-time or part-time were selected. This selection resulted in 372 Japanese couples in the analysis. In this sample, women were an average of 44.3 years old and had 12.7 years of formal education ; men were an average of 46.6 years of age and 13.6 years of formal education. Years of marriage were an average of 18.6 years and 15.9 per cent had more than one child younger than 8 year-old. Full-time employed wives worked an average of 42.3 hours per week ; part-time employed wives were an average 23.0 hours per week. Relative earnings to total couple's earnings were 40.7 per cent for the full-time employed wives ; 13.0 per cent for the part-time working wives. It was noteworthy that the Japanese full-time working wives had similar relative earnings but longer working hours to their Swedish counterpart. Japanese part-time working wives, however, have much less working hours and relative earnings compared to the Swedish sample. In the present paper, the Japanese data was analyzed separately according to a different employment status : full-time and part-time.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the spring, 2002 with the 12 married women ; five were employed full-time, four were part-time workers, three were full-time housewives in two-parent households in Osaka Prefecture. All the women were in their

30's or 40's and had at least one child younger than 12 year-old. Five full-time working mothers had always worked full time since they graduated from a high school or university while four part-time mothers had started to work part-time after their children got older.

(2) Division of Domestic Chores

Table 1 provides the relative distribution of the five common household tasks (cooking, laundry, cleaning, grocery shopping, and cleaning-up after meal) performed by women and men between the two countries.

Consistent with previous research, gender inequality in the division of household labor exists in both countries, although Japanese husbands' relative share is much smaller than that of Swedish men. In the Swedish sample, the proportions of men performing household tasks more than equivalent to women range from a low of 19.8 per cent for laundry to a high of 46.7 per cent for cleaning-up after meal. On the contrary, the equivalent figures for the Japanese sample with full-time employed wives range from 11.2 per cent for cooking to 27.0 per cent for cleaning and for the sample with part-time

Table 1　Allocation of Household Labor by Wife and Husband (Women's Responses)

(%)

		Always wife	Mainly wife	About the same	Mainly husband	Always husband	N
〈JAPAN〉							
Cooking	Full-time	50.6	38.2	9.0	2.2	—	89
	Part-time	72.4	25.8	1.8	—	—	283
Laundry	Full-time	51.1	23.9	17.0	6.8	1.1	88
	Part-time	80.9	17.7	1.4	—	—	283
Cleaning	Full-time	39.3	33.7	16.9	10.1	—	89
	Part-time	63.7	31.7	3.6	1.1	—	281
Grocery shopping	Full-time	43.8	43.8	9.0	3.4	—	89
	Part-time	60.8	35.3	3.5	0.4	—	283
Cleaning-up after meal	Full-time	36.0	39.3	18.0	4.5	1.1	89
	Part-time	60.1	34.3	3.2	1.1	0.4	283
〈SWEDEN〉							
Cooking		28.7	44.3	19.3	6.3	1.4	652
Laundry		55.4	24.9	13.5	4.6	1.7	654
Cleaning		25.3	41.2	28.0	4.8	0.6	643
Grocery shopping		20.5	37.5	31.8	8.7	1.5	654
Cleaning-up after meal		15.9	37.4	34.1	10.9	1.7	634

employed wives rang from 1.4 per cent for laundry to 4.7 per cent for cleaning and cleaning-up after meal. It is important to note that variations among couples' allocation of domestic chores are much smaller among the Japanese sample than the Swedish sample. This is especially applicable to the Japanese sample with part-time employed wives.

(3) Overt Conflict as Sign of Manifest Power

The first research question concerns the extent to which women and men are satisfied with the division of domestic chores in the two countries (see Table 2). Looking at the Japanese sample, 93.7 per cent of husbands are satisfied (“very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied”) with the division of domestic labor while only 51.7 per cent of full-time employed and 65.8 per cent of part-time employed wives are content. Among the Swedish sample, the proportion of men who are satisfied (“very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied”) is 71.9 per cent while this figure for women is 61.3 per cent. Men in both countries are highly content in the area of housework compared to women. However, this discrepancy is larger among the Japanese sample.

Conflicts arise when spouses have different preferences. As indicated above, men in both countries are quite content with the way household chores are divided while women in both countries are less content. The existing division of housework, where women are doing most part of housework, indicates men's preferences prevail. In this context, overt conflicts such as attempts at change in the area of domestic labor are outcomes of manifest power.

As shown in Table 3, conflicts over the division of labor are considerably different between the two countries with more open-conflicts reported among the Swedish sample. For example, 65.6 per cent of Swedish women (“often” or “sometimes”) desire for change

Table 2　Satisfaction with the Division of Household Labor by Gender

(%)

		Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Undecided	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	N
〈JAPAN〉							
Wife	Full-time	9.0	42.7	—	39.3	9.0	89
	Part-time	7.9	57.9	—	28.4	5.8	278
Husbands		34.4	59.3	—	6.0	0.3	372
〈SWEDEN〉							
Women		18.8	42.5	24.3	11.7	2.8	650
Men		27.3	44.6	25.6	1.6	0.8	616

Table 3　Conflicts over the Division of Household Labor (Women's Responses)

(%)

		Often	Some times	Once in a while	Never	N
〈JAPAN〉						
〈Desired Change〉						
1. I would like my husband to do a little more housework.	Full-time	25.8	29.2	27.0	18.0	89
	Part-time	17.0	29.3	34.6	19.1	283
〈Overt Conflicts〉						
2. I propose to negociate with my husband about the Sharing of housework.	Full-time	4.5	15.7	36.0	43.8	89
	Part-time	2.5	11.7	34.0	51.8	282
3. I differ in opinion with my husband about sharing of housework.	Full-time	9.0	11.2	36.0	43.8	89
	Part-time	7.8	9.9	28.4	53.9	282
〈Covert Conflicts〉						
4. Despite the dissatisfaction about the sharing of housework, I do not bring it up for the sake of family harmony.	Full-time	9.0	20.2	28.1	42.7	89
	Part-time	13.5	17.4	29.9	39.1	281
5. Since it is troublesome to complain to my husband, I do more housework.	Full-time	23.6	28.1	36.0	12.4	89
	Part-time	28.9	30.7	27.5	12.9	280
〈SWEDEN〉						
〈Desired Change〉						
1. I would like my husband to do a little more housework.		15.6	50.2	24.0	10.2	654
〈Overt Conflicts〉						
2. I propose to negotiate with my husband about the Sharing of housework.		8.0	39.3	31.8	20.8	653
3. I differ in opinion with my husband about sharing of housework.		5.8	29.2	36.3	28.7	651
〈Covert Conflicts〉						
4. Despite the dissatisfaction about the sharing of housework, I do not bring it up for the sake of family harmony.		8.4	21.8	25.9	43.7	651
5. Since it is troublesome to complain to my husband, I do more housework.		13.5	32.5	21.5	32.5	650

and 47.3 per cent actually negotiate with their husband with the same frequency. On the other hand, among the Japanese sample, 55.0 per cent of the full-time employed wives ("often" or "sometimes") desire for change but only 20.2 per cent actually negotiate; 46.3 per cent of part-time employed wives wish for change and 14.2 per cent actually have negotiations. Similarly, 35.0 per cent of Swedish women report a difference in opinion with husbands, this figure is 20.2 per cent among the Japanese full-time employed wives, 17.7 per cent among the part-time working wives.

These findings appear to be consistent with what revealed in the interviews with the

twelve Japanese married women. Only a few women negotiate the division of household labor with their husbands. One mother, a full-time primary teacher with a nine-year old son, sometimes complains to her husband about how housework should be done. Her husband is a clerical worker at a different primary school and has less income and less demanding work schedule than her. He performs household chores such as cleaning up dishes, cooking on weekends, and doing the laundry.

> [My husband] does the laundry, but I end up doing more laundry than he does. . . I guess I notice things [that should be taken care of] more than him. For example, he does not notice he should use the water we used for taking a bath. /. . . / I have complained to my husband that I still do more [household work] than him. . . I have said to my husband once, “Let’s discuss about how we divide household work.” My husband said, “I don’t want to discuss about it.” He said either of us who notice things should do. For my part, I want to discuss because he does not notice and hardly does laundry.

Another mother with two children (9 year-old and 5 year-old), a local government employee married to another government worker, has been struggling against her husband to bring more equal sharing in domestic work. She gained a plenty of knowledge by attending various seminars as one of representative members of a labor union. She began to complain to her husband “Why do I have to do the lion’s part of housework even though we work the same amount of time?” As the results, (she thinks) her husband started doing a lot more housework. However, according to her, her husband“understands with his head (that he should share more household work), but hasn’t fully accepted yet.” He has quite a negative attitude toward sharing of housework.

> I wish my husband did not complain so much when he does housework. My kid says, “When my mammy is doing housework, she doesn’t complain, but when my daddy is doing, he complains a lot.” Maybe he thinks in his mind “Why do I have to do this?” . . .For instance, he was the one who started cleaning while I wanted to relax. He muttered like “How does this thing get here?” “This is such an obstacle!” “I am so tired.” He thought I could not hear him, but I could hear all the things he was complaining. . . When I asked “What?” he replied “Nothing!” I know [from my children] he calls me something like “that bitch” when I am not home.

In an analysis based on the same Swedish data used here, Ahrne and Roman (1997) examine the relations of conflicts and couples' relative share of three major household tasks (cooking, laundry, and cleaning). It is noteworthy that they confirm more conflicts in the household, in which men share less household tasks. In contrast to Sweden, it is striking how little overt conflicts occur among the Japanese couples whether wives are employed full-time or not. Despite the fact that the Japanese wives clearly do most of the housework, only a minority has explicit conflicts with their husbands. However, the cases of Japanese couples, in which fewer conflicts are reported, do not indicate less power is involved than their Swedish counterpart. It could be other dimensions of power at stake (Komter, 1989). In the next section, I examine the latent power ; the second dimension of power.

(4) Covert conflicts and Latent Power

Power also operates when conflicts become covert because the needs and wishes of the more powerful person are anticipated and met. Such conflicts are sign of latent power. Table 3 indicates extent to which covert conflicts are prevalent in the area of housework. Overall, Japanese women appear to have more covert conflicts and they are more likely to give up bringing up their dissatisfaction about housework. Although the proportion of women who “give up negotiations for the sake of family harmony despite the dissatisfaction about the sharing of housework” is nearly same in both Japan and Sweden, there are considerable differences in the proportions of women who “do more housework because it is troublesome to complain to their husbands.” Women who often or sometimes do more housework since it is troublesome to complain to their husbands consist of 46.0 per cent among the Swedish sample. On the other hand this figure is 51.7 per cent among the Japanese sample with full-time employed wives and 59.6 per cent for part-time employed wives.

In an interviews with a full-time working mother of 9-year-old daughter, a technical staff at a well-known Japanese corporation indicates she has once tried to alter the ways household chores are divided between her and her husband. Her attempt at change, however, met with passivity and unwillingness from her husband. According to her, her husband does not like to be told that he should do this way or his way is not good. Knowing his personality, she has given up pushing him any further to bring about changes. She appears to have developed some adjustments to the inequitable division of housework by changing her perception and she conceives her managing both paid work and housework

is a sign of her great competence.

> [Since our child was born] I began to feel strongly that we should take care ourselves by ourselves. I began not to count on others. I began not to demand something from my husband like “I wish you have done things” or “I wish you have done this way.” I do not ask such things. Why?. . . Once I said to my husband because I wanted to commit more to my work. . . “Let’s take turns in taking care of our kid every week.” My husband said, “Ok I buy ready-made dishes everyday.” I wanted him to cook. . . so I said to myself “Why bother to ask him? I can manage by myself.” The more strains you put on yourself, the more you are able to manage. I think I have become a bigger person as I have more things to manage.

Another full-time career mother of two children (9 year-old and 5 year-old) also states she does not complain to her husband about the division of housework. She is a chemist working at a research institute and her husband is a site supervisor at a large construction company. He usually leaves home very early in the morning and comes home around midnight. Therefore, their children don’t see him at all on weekdays. Considering time pressures and job-related constrains and demands on him, she conceives it is not reasonable to push him into sharing more housework. She also feels if she insists her husband to take more share in housework, she might jeopardize the relationship with her husband.

> He seems enjoying his work. This is why I do not complain to my husband. When I see him buying trade papers by his own money, gathering all sorts of information even at home and getting various licenses for his career, I feel I should support him. I do not want to say to him to do more housework. [I guess] my husband can comfortably devote himself to his work and my doings make this possible. However, I do not want to make my husband feel obligated to me. . . Anyhow I do not like depending on him and I do not like counting on him. If you count on others too much when you are living together, your relations become tense. I believe the relationship would not go well unless you have the attitude that you can do something for your partner. I think it is unreasonable to ask my husband to do more housework.

Having a high-earning husband also reduces opportunities for negotiations about the

division of housework. A woman with two children (12-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son), a part-time worker at a large adult education school, married to a government employee at a ministry, is not content with the way housework is divided between her and her husband. However, she seems to persuade herself to believe it's reasonable for her to perform a majority of housework because of her economical disadvantage to her husband.

> I am not satisfied [with the housework situation] but I realize we are not able to change now [living together for a long time]. I guess [the way we divide housework is] reasonable. I do not think it is fair. . . But if my husband tells me "Work and support my family as I do", it is impossible for me. Therefore, I cannot complain. The reason why I can live like this is that my husband is working. Therefore, it is unfair to ask my husband to share housework equally.

(5) Invisible Power Underlying Consensus

Power is also involved even without conscious awareness of the individuals involved. Invisible power that systematically differentiates women and men could be so embedded in practices and persons that even women perceive male privilege as legitimate (Komter, 1989). Thus, it is understood gender norms, gendered selves, and the tacit rules for men-women interaction are symbolic forms of power.

Table 4 indicates women's attitudes about who should take the final responsibility of housework and earning. As one would expect, traditional gender-role attitudes are considerably persistent in Japan while egalitarian attitudes are widely perpetuated in Sweden. For instance, in the Japanese sample, 51.7 per cent of full-time working wives agree on that women should take the final responsibility of housework while 80.1 per cent of

Table 4 Attitudes on Final Responsibility of Housework and Breadwinning (Women's Responses)

(%)

		Husband mainly	Wife mainly	Same	N
〈JAPAN〉					
1. Final responsibility of housework	Full-time	1.1	51.7	47.2	89
	Part-time	0.7	80.1	19.2	281
2. Final responsibility of earning living expenses	Full-time	55.1	—	44.9	89
	Part-time	87.6	—	12.4	282
〈SWEDEN〉					
1. Final responsibility of housework		0.4	10.4	89.1	649
2. Final responsibility of earning living expenses		13.2	0.9	85.9	638

the part-time working wives agree on this. Similarly, 55.1 per cent of the full-time working wives agree on that men should take the final responsibility of earning living expenses and 87.6 per cent of the part-time employed wives agree on this. In the Swedish sample, on the contrary, nearly 90 per cent of women perceive both women and men should take the same responsibility of doing housework and earning living expenses.

Table 5 also provides women's reasons for doing housework. Blain (1994) identifies four common discourses that run through women's talk of domestic labor : "roles and socialization", "personal preference", "abilities of women", and "natural bonding of mother and child." As shown in Table 5, gendered discourses upon division of domestic labor are more prevalent among the Japanese women. For instance, in the Japanese sample, 54.6 per cent of the full-time and 77.0 per cent of the part-time employed women agree ("applies"or"somewhat apply") that they do more housework because they feel the wife should do housework ; this figure for their Swedish counterpart is 41.4 per cent. Similarly, 68.5 per cent of the full-time and 73.5 per cent of the part-time employed women agree ("applies"or"somewhat apply") on that they do more housework because they are better at it ; this figure for Swedish women is 51.6 per cent. An interview with a part-time working mother at a department store with 11-year-old son indicates that her paid work is constructed as her pleasure rather than a necessity for her family. According to her, she suffered from a lot of stress when she stayed home alone with her child. She is pleased to go to work and unconcerned with her double burden. Her husband, a chief at a large super-

Table 5　Reasons for Division of Household Work (Women's Responses)

(%)

		Applies	Somewhat applies	Does not quite apply	Does not apply at all	N
〈JAPAN〉						
1. Since the wife should do housework, I do more housework.	Full-time	27.3	27.3	31.8	13.6	88
	Part-time	47.1	29.9	14.4	8.6	278
2. Since I like to have a clean and tidy place, I do more housework.	Full-time	33.7	37.1	25.8	3.4	89
	Part-time	48.9	33.3	15.6	2.1	282
3. Since I am better at it, I do more housework.	Full-time	25.8	42.7	25.8	5.6	89
	Part-time	38.7	34.8	21.6	5.0	282
〈SWEDEN〉						
1. Since the wife should do housework, I do more housework.		13.8	27.6	24.1	34.4	651
2. Since I like to have a clean and tidy place, I do more housework.		28.8	34.5	20.4	16.2	652
3. Since I am better at it, I do more housework.		13.6	38.0	21.4	27.0	516

market, also appears to conceive her work as secondary and expects her to take a full responsibility for household work.

> I am satisfied [with housework]. Working means “the stress alleviation” for me. If I do not work, I probably shut myself. . . Well, when I am working, it gives me a good feeling of strain. . . I also get some attention from others. My husband once said if I feel too tired from balancing both housework and paid work, I can quit working anytime. . . My husband lets me do whatever I like to do. . . I think I am successful to bring about what I want from my husband.

A full-time mother of two children (5-year-old and 2-year-old) feels highly positive about doing housework. She has been a full-time housewife since she got married and prefers doing housework to working outside. Household labor appears to play a strongly positive role in her identity as a wife and a mother.

> I would feel restless all day long if I did not do all the cleaning I planned after I got up in the morning.

> I think it is better a mother brings up a child by herself until a child reaches around one year old. . . for my case I can't make so much money even I decide to go to work. . . I feel I should do housework orderly rather than working outside.

4. Discussions

This paper empirically examined power processes in the allocation of household labor among the dual-working couples within two countries, Japan and Sweden.

First, based on the empirical findings of this study, power appeared to work on the advantage of male partners in both countries. As indicated earlier, women in both countries were less satisfied than men were, however they could not attain men's greater share in the housework. Men's higher satisfaction with the existing unequal division of housework was a common form of male power identified in both Japan and Sweden. Why can men get it their way? It is certain that male advantages over female partners in economical and normative resources are critical factors in explaining the exercise of male power in the marriage. This means that, in both counties, males use their greater access

to power resources such as normative, economic and, in some-cases, physical recourses, to greater or lesser degrees, in order to realize their wishes about work in the home (Ahrne & Roman, 2004 : 195). In other words, the real division of housework between spouses is inevitably comply with females' disadvantages over their male partners in power resources, which are parts of the social structures making up society's gender order (Connel, 1987).

Second, it was probably a most significant finding in the present paper that manifest and hidden (latent and invisible) forms of power played different roles among couples between the two countries. While manifest power was particularly prominent among the Swedish couples, it was less likely to find such a power mechanism in the Japanese couples. In contrast with Sweden, it was hidden power that appeared to be more apparent regardless wives' employment status in the Japanese couples. Why are more hidden conflicts arisen among the Japanese dual-working couples? One possible explanation is that a comparatively larger discrepancy in economic resources between spouses exists among the Japanese couples. Having fewer economic resources, trapped by limited options, women are induced to define unequal situations as reasonable. A Japanese part-time working mother married to a high-earning government employee discussed earlier in the present paper, is a clear case in point.

However, an economic factor existing between spouses is not necessarily only an explanation for the gendered division of housework. According to the economic resource argument, one can expect to find the evidence of more manifest conflicts among the Japanese households with the full-time employed wives. Yet what is found in both quantitative and qualitative data is that they appear to avoid open negotiations because they anticipate the other partner's negative reaction and/or perceive the existing unequal division of domestic labor as fair. It is indicated, further, there is smaller amount of inter-couple variations regardless of wives' employment status among the Japanese sample.

Cultural explanation with regard to how domestic tasks are divided between spouses, place the emphasis on traditional gender norms, attitudes and discourses that reproduce asymmetrical power relationships in the marriage. It is a well-known fact that gender equality has been a strongly established principle in Sweden. As shown in this study, nearly 90 per cent of Swedish females felt that wives and husbands should bear equal responsibility for the housework and earning living expenses. In Sweden, many women are no longer prepared simply to do almost everything around the house, which is why the division of domestic labor has increasingly become the subject of open conflicts

between partners (Ahrne & Roman, 2004 : 196). In other words, overt conflicts can be understood as an indication of the fact that normative power of males in the families has diminished and as the results, more space has created for negotiations about sharing the housework. On the contrary, gender equality has not been deeply rooted in Japan. The rigid gendered cultures, strengthened by employment system and state policies, appear to preclude open conflicts and negotiations from taking place among Japanese couples.

Note

This article is based on the paper I presented at the Gender Studies Seminar held in November, 2002 at the department of Sociology, Uppsala University in Sweden. I would like to thank Christine Roman and other participants of the Seminar for their helpful comments and suggestions.

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〔付記〕

本稿は，平成 14 度の学外研修（海外・長期）に基づく研究成果報告の一部である。

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2004 年 10 月 15 日受理